ECYS ANNOUNCES ANNUAL BENEFIT CONCERT MARCH 14, 2015 IN CUPERTINO WITH SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY VIOLINIST CHEN ZHAO, AWARD-WINNING PIANIST SANDRA WRIGHT SHEN, AND CONDUCTOR DR. JINDONG CAI

(Palo Alto, CA – February 12, 2015) On March 14, 7:30pm at Flint Center in Cupertino, the El Camino Youth Symphony presents an evening of passionate splendor highlighted by virtuosic performances by special guests San Francisco Symphony Violinist Chen Zhao and award-winning pianist Sandra Wright Shen, and introducing ECYS Co-Concertmaster Stella Han, violin. Ms. Shen's fluid fingers will cast a spell with De Falla's mysterious *Nights in the Gardens of Spain* while Chen Zhao and Stella Han will ignite the stage with a pyrotechnic performance of
Sarasate’s fiery *Navarra for Two Violins*! For the finale, the Symphony sets sail with Rimsky-Korsakov’s romantic showpiece *Scheherazade*, the composer’s triumph of imagination inspired by the tale of Arabian Nights.

ECYS continues to make music education and musical excellence a priority. In addition to his special collaboration with Stella Han, Chen Zhao will sit with the orchestra and share solos with the ECYS Co-Concertmaster Young Hye Lee on Rimsky-Korsakov’s *Scheherazade*. It will be a truly unique mentoring performance. Tickets ($38 General/$28 Student-Senior) are available at Ticketmaster.com.

**Chen Zhao** joined the San Francisco Symphony in August 2000. Since then he has participated in highly acclaimed performances and recordings of Mahler’s symphonies and the "Keeping Score" PBS documentary films under the direction of Michael Tilson Thomas. Chen is a graduate of the Curtis Institute of Music, San Francisco Conservatory of Music, and the Shanghai Conservatory of Music. He is currently on faculty at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, The San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra, and the Stanford Symphony Orchestra.

**Sandra Wright Shen**, described as a classical “pianist of the first order,” has appeared at the Kennedy Music Center in DC, the Chicago Cultural Center, the Frankfurt Cultural Center in Germany, the Forbidden City Concert Hall in Beijing, and the Taiwan National Concert Hall. Sandra won first prizes in the International Piano Competition of France, Hilton Head International Piano Competition, the Mieczyslaw Munz Piano Competition, and the Taiwan National Piano Competition. Ms. Shen received her BM and MM in Piano Performance from the Peabody Conservatory under Ann Schein. Sandra last performed with ECYS during the spectacular 50th Anniversary Season.

Born in Beijing, Music Director and Conductor **Dr. Jindong Cai** received his early musical training in China, where he learned to play the violin and the piano. He came to the United States for his graduate studies at the New England Conservatory and the College-Conservatory of Music in Cincinnati. In 1989, he was selected to study with famed conductor Leonard Bernstein at the Tanglewood Music Center, and won the Conducting Fellowship Award at the Aspen Music Festival in 1990 and 1992.
Professor Cai served on the faculties at the Louisiana State University, the University of Arizona, the College-Conservatory of Music at the University of Cincinnati, and the University of California at Berkeley. He held assistant conducting positions with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, Cincinnati Pops Orchestra, and the Cincinnati Chamber Orchestra, working closely with conductors Jesus Lopez-Cobos, Erich Kunzel, and Keith Lockhart. Dr. Cai joined the Stanford University faculty in 2004 as the first holder of the Gretchen B. Kimball Director of Orchestral Studies’ Chair and Associate Professor in Music Performance. He is currently the Music Director and Conductor of the Stanford Symphony Orchestra, the Stanford Philharmonia Orchestra, and the Stanford New Ensemble. He is also the Artistic Director of the Stanford Pan-Asian Music Festival, which he founded in 2005.

Two core principles underlie the ECYS mission: Music Education, to nurture, train and develop young musicians from culturally diverse backgrounds and encourage a lasting appreciation of music, and Musical Excellence, to provide high-quality performance opportunities for young people and outstanding musical events for the wider community. The Senior Symphony, El Camino Youth Symphony’s preeminent orchestra, is comprised of over 120 talented young musicians from all over the Bay Area who perform professional repertoire and travel internationally. ECYS offers its students the opportunity to learn from and perform with world-renowned musicians, recent guest artists include pianists Ilya Yakushev and Naomi Kudo, violinists Philippe Quint and David Kim, cellist Zuill Bailey, and Brandon Ridenour, trumpet. The orchestra has been honored to perform at Davies Symphony Hall in San Francisco, most recently in January 2014 at the Bay Area Youth Orchestra Festival. Previous Music Directors include Dr. Camilla Kolchinsky, Melissa McBride, and Dr. Arthur Barnes. Grace Lai is the current President of the Board of Directors.

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